Matthew Bunting

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Education

Florida Gulf Coast University
Bachelor of Science in Marine Science, Minors in Biology & Geology

Undergraduate Research:

- Tagging and tracking juvenile Smalltooth Sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*) to determine preferred habitat use.
- Sampling age-1 Snook (*Centropomus undecimalis*) to determine growth rates as well as preferred habitats.

Research and Work Experience

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) June 2013-present

- Participate in data collection and species identification for Florida's Fisheries-Independent Monitoring Program to evaluate abundance, growth, and health of inshore fish stocks. Collection of data during field sampling as well as entering, proofing, and correcting collected data following FWC QA/QC standards. Fish identification performed using dichotomous keys. Work-ups performed in lab include collection of otolith and mercury samples. Training as principle investigator in field, including operation of small watercraft, navigation, sample site selection as well as following established procedures for gear deployment. Conduct sawfish research including acoustic tracking, gear deployment, and tagging (see below).
- Experience with elasmobranch fishes (sharks and rays) comes from the FWC's Smalltooth Sawfish Project (funded through Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act [ESA]). I currently assist with sampling for sawfish with FWC under ESA permit #21043. Since its inception, the FWC's sawfish research program has captured, tagged, and released almost 600 Smalltooth Sawfish; I have participated in many of these captures and have experience with all capture methods authorized under the permit (i.e., gill nets, seines, rod and reel, longline); I have been trained in all tagging and sampling techniques authorized under the permit (e.g., genetic sampling, PIT tag application, rototag tag application, acoustic tag application), including completion of the NMFS sea turtle training (21 & 22 March 2016). Most recently, during spring and summer 2020, I learned how to complete surgeries for internal implantation of acoustic tags by practicing in the laboratory on small- and medium-sized sawfish carcasses (>50 sutures using a variety of needle sizes) and in the field on live sawfish under the supervision of experienced researchers, including Dr. Poulakis, and independently under the watchful eye of experienced researchers, but without input from them (>30 sutures using a variety of needle sizes).